



Quality Assurance Bulletin

November 13, 2009 No. 09-07

Program Support Bureau
County of Los Angeles - Department of Mental Health
Marvin J. Southard, DSW, Director

Opening Date for Episodes

Episode Opening Date

The Department's basic rule for opening an episode is that a face-to-face Assessment contact with the client must occur prior to the opening of an episode. When non-face-to-face direct services are delivered prior to the opening of the episode, the Department would like to capture at least some of this pre-face-to-face/episode opening service information as a part of the clinical record. To that end, the Department will allow the opening date of an episode to be the date of the first service that was documented to the standards of the payer of the service **within the calendar month of the face-to-face/episode opening**. It is important to note that this rule regarding the time frame for claiming pre-face-to-face contacts is based on the need to take into account monthly Medi-Cal eligibility and required time frames for completing the assessment when claims are submitted.

Please note that ONLY ACCESS, EOB, and Specialized Foster Care Co-Located Programs have been given Department authorization to open an episode without ever having a face-to-face service.

EXAMPLE

October 5, 2009 - Contact with an individual or collateral resulting in information gathering that may assist in the future Assessment of the client or a face-to-face Triage in which an appointment is made for a future assessment

- Use a Progress Note to document to Medi-Cal standards all required elements of a Progress Note dating the service with the actual date of the service (October 5, 2009)
- Create a Non-Open PHI File (in accord with DMH Policy and Procedure)
- Do NOT submit a claim at this time

October 12, 2009 - Face-to-face service with the individual resulting in an Assessment, diagnosis, and open episode

- For purposes of an audit trail, use a Progress Note to document that an Assessment was completed and document all required elements of a Progress Note dating the service with the actual date of the service (October 12, 2009)
- On the completed Assessment form the signature date will be October 12, 2009
- On the completed Assessment form the "Admission Date" will be the date of the first documented service (October 5, 2009)
- On the Open Episode form, use the date of first documented service (October 5, 2009) for the "Admit Date"
- Submit the claims for both October 5, 2009 and for October 12, 2009

If you have questions regarding the information in this QA Bulletin, please contact your Service Area QA liaison or your MHSA Age Lead QA liaison.

* The information in this QA Bulletin is in immediate effect and will be included in future editions of the SD/MC Organizational Provider's Manual.

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